

ONCE MORE ON TWO PASSAGES OF THE PĀLI CANON

1. *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbatopabhaṃ¹, taṃ paṭhaviyā paṭhavattena ananubhūtaṃ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṃ, tejassa tejattena ananubhūtaṃ, vāyassa vāyattena ananubhūtaṃ, bhūtānaṃ bhūtattena ananubhūtaṃ, devānaṃ devattena ananubhūtaṃ... sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṃ².*
2. *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbatopabhaṃ¹/
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī tejo vāyo na gādhati//
ettha dīghaṇi ca rassaṇi ca añuṇ-thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ/
ettha nāmaṇi ca rūpaṇi ca asesam uparujjhati//
viññānaṃ nirodhena etth' etaṃ uparujjhati³*

Some thirty years ago I read a paper on these two passages, and a famous Pāli scholar, after having read the summary, did not come to hear me but went on telling people around him, who knew no Pāli, that I did not understand the Pāli texts. Perhaps he believed that V.

1. On the reading see K.R. NORMAN, "An Epithet of Nibbāna", *Śramaṇa-Vidyā: Studies in Buddhism. Professor Jagannath Upadhyaya Commemoration Volume I* (Sarnath, 1987), pp. 23-31 (*Collected Papers III*, Oxford, Pali Text Society, 1992, pp. 183-189).

2. *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, pp. 329-330 (*Brahmanimantaṇika-sutta*). The editions of Pāli texts quoted here are those of the Pali Text Society.

3. *Dīgha-Nikāya* I, p. 223 (*Kevaddha [Kevaṭṭa]-sutta*).

Trenckner, while editing the first volume of the *Majjhima-Nikāya* in 1888, was right in attributing the words of the Buddha to his adversary, despite the fact that this attribution has led to the following picture of the Buddha - not too glorious for the Omniscient:

... the Buddha did not attack the concept of *viññāna* by polemics; he overpowered Brahmā in another way, namely by the use of supernatural powers⁴.

Perhaps he thought, with other scholars, that the word *viññāna* used twice in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* passage refers to the same entity. Finally, he thought perhaps that it was not even necessary to relegate these passages - which apparently set forth an Upaniṣadic doctrine - to a "precanonical" or "pre-Hinayānistic" Buddhism, as St. Schayer did⁵.

Be that as it may, I have written on the subject⁶, and, as could be expected, my work has had no impact at all on later studies. For reasons not quite clear to me, Étienne Lamotte cited the *Dīgha-Nikāya* passage to explain a passage of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (*Upadeśa*), which puts forward a view that is attributed to the *ekaccasassatikā ekacca-asassatikā* in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya*⁷. More recently, Steven Collins, in his book *Selfless persons*, has discussed at some length the *Kevaddha-sutta* passage; and, given the extraordinary character of his observations, I wish to make a comment on them.

4. HAJIME NAKAMURA, "Upaniṣadic Tradition and the Early School of Vedānta As Noticed in Buddhist Scripture", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18 (1955), p. 79. More on this in my Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi Memorial Lectures, 1997 (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1998).

5. ST. SCHAYER, "Precanonical Buddhism", *Archiv Orientalní* VII (1935), p. 131 (*Selected Papers*, edited by M. MEJOR, Warsaw, 1988, p. 480); cf. C. REGAMEY, "Le problème du bouddhisme primitif et les derniers travaux de Stanisław Schayer", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XXI (1957), p. 48.

6. *L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien* (Paris, 1973), pp. 53-54 with the notes.

7. E. LAMOTTE, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse* IV (Louvain, 1976), p. 2079. See my review of C.A. Scherrer-Schaub, *Yuktiśaṣṭikāvṛtti*, in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (Dordrecht) 22 (1994), p. 392 ; also *L'Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 13, n. 4.

Collins writes:

Although an enlightened man's consciousness is a karmic result, it is not limited by usual saṃsāric constraints. It is 'indescribable, infinite, radiant on every side'. We should not misinterpret this kind of consciousness as a 'cosmic consciousness', in the manner of the *Vedānta* picture of ultimate reality as *sat-cit-ānanda*, 'Being-Consciousness-Bliss'. Rather, like the 'Widespread, far-reaching, immeasurable' mind with which the monk experiencing the Divine Abidings is endowed, and like the 'immeasurable mind' of a monk in the forth meditative stage, and like the sphere of Infinite Consciousness attained at the seventh stage, this consciousness will cease, at final *nibbāna*. When final *nibbāna* is attained, everything ceases, even those states and virtues which Buddhism itself holds dear. The passage I quoted earlier which spoke of the destruction of construction-consciousness by a stream-winner, says in the case of the *Arhat*: 'through the cessation of the last consciousness of an *Arhat* who is dying into final *nibbāna*-without-substrate, wisdom, mindfulness, and (all) name-and-form cease'. This 'last consciousness' is said to be a *constructed*-consciousness, and it is through the 'cessation by non-arising, in virtue of the non-arising' of this *constructed*-consciousness that *nibbāna* becomes final...

And in a note he says:

Carimaka-viññāṇaṃ pi abhisamkhāra-viññāṇaṃ pi (DA. II. 393, commenting on the 'indescribable, infinite, radiant consciousness' of D.I. 223...)⁸.

A similar interpretation was given by O.H. de A. Wijesekera⁹. What is novel here is that Collins appeals to the Tradition to support his interpretation. But this reposes either on an intentional distortion or on a misunderstanding of Buddhaghosa's commentary.

For Buddhaghosa, the first word *viññāṇa* in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* passage, as the word *viññāṇa* in the *Majjhima-Nikāya* passage, does not mean "consciousness" at all, "constructed" or not; it is a "name for *nibbāna*" (*nibbānassa nāmaṇ*), in the sense that *nibbāna* is to be "preeminently known" or - as the *Ṭīkā* on the *Sumaṅgalāvīlāsini* puts

8. S. COLLINS, *Selfless persons* (Cambridge, 1982; reprinted 1990 and 1992), p. 207 and n. 22 (p. 296).

9. O.H. DE A. WIJSEKERA, "The Concept of Viññāṇa in Theravāda Buddhism", JAOS 84 (1964), p. 258.

it - "known through a preeminent means"¹⁰.

And *carimaka-viññāṇaṃ pi abhisamkhāra-viññāṇaṃ pi* does not gloss the first *viññāṇa*, but the second *viññāṇa*. It is when this phenomenal consciousness ceases that all the empirical realities - the four elements, the antinomies, individuality - cease in *nibbāna*:

...*tattha viññātabban ti viññāṇaṃ. nibbānassa taṃ nāmaṇ...*

ettha āpo cā, ti ettha nibbāne. idaṃ nibbānaṃ āgamma sabbaṃ etaṃ apo tiādinā nayena vuttaṃ upādinna-dhammajātaṃ nirujjhati appavattaṃ hoti.

*idāni tassa nirujjhanupāyaṃ dassento viññāṇassa nirodhena etth' etaṃ uparujjhatīti āha. tattha viññāṇaṃ ti carimaka-viññāṇaṃ pi abhisamkhāra-viññāṇaṃ pi...*¹¹

In his eagerness to isolate Buddhism from the Upaniṣadic tradition, Buddhaghosa explains away *viññāṇa* in the two passages.

But to the impartial reader it will appear that the doctrine set forth, especially in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* passage, is the same as that of Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*. In the universal and absolute Consciousness, all the empirical realities, including individuality, cease to exist, and they cease when the empirical consciousness has ceased. One may recall the passages of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* where Yājñavalkya talks about the *ātman* as a "homogeneous mass of consciousness without inside and outside" (*anantaro 'bāhyaḥ kṛtsnaḥ prajñānaghana [vijñānaghana] eva*) and at the same time says that "after Liberation there is no consciousness" (*na pretya saṃjñāsti*)¹². By

10. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* II, p. 393. Cf. *Papañcasūdanī* II, p. 413. - *viññātabban ti viṣiṭṭhena ñātabbaṃ, sabbaññānttamena ariyamaggaññānena paccakkhato jānitabban ti attho. Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathāṭīkā* I, p. 512. The *Ṭīkā* on the *Papañcasūdanī* (edited in Burma and recently in India) is not available to me at this moment.

11. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* II, p. 393. At the end Buddhaghosa refers to the *Mahāniddesa*, which may be a mistake for *Cullaniddesa*: see Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 206, 207 with the notes 15 and 21 (pp. 295, 296); also my review of Scherrer-Schaub in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 22 (1994), p. 392. Note that *abhisamkhāra-viññāṇa* is not a gloss of *carimaka-viññāṇa* as Collins thinks, but refers to a different type of consciousness - "constructive-consciousness".

12. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* IV, 5, 13; cf. II, 4, 12. - I find a great deal of confusion in K. R. Norman's paper "Aspects of early Buddhism", *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka*, edited by David Seyfort Ruegg and Lambert Schmithausen (Panels of the VIIth World Sanskrit Conference. General Editor: Johannes Bronkhorst, Vol. II.

saṃjñā here is to be understood, of course, as Śaṅkara makes it clear, *viśeṣasaṃjñā* or *viśeṣavijñāna*, “particular (individual) consciousness”.

And, so far as I am concerned, I do not see anything in the Pāli Canon that contradicts the doctrine recorded in the two passages.

Leiden, 1990), p. 24 (*Collected Papers* IV, 1993, p. 124). See, however, K. BHATTACHARYA, *L'Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 45, n. 3, pp. 48 ff.

On *pretya* here - “after Liberation”, and not “after death” - see *L'Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 50-51. Also Sureśvara, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārttika* (Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series 16, Poona, 1892-94), p. 1106, st. 437; Pārthasārathimīśra on Kumārila's *Ślokavārttika*, *Ātmavāda* 147.